THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE of SOUTH DAKOTA

BISHOP'S VISITATION CUSTOMARY

UPDATED: April 23, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Visiting the worshipping communities in the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota is one of the principal responsibilities of the Bishop's ministry with you. It is also one of the great delights and joys of the office. This updated customary has been put together to help you prepare for the Bishop's visitation so everything goes as smoothly as possible.

The most central acts of every Bishop's visitation are preaching God's Word and celebrating the Holy Eucharist with the clergy and people of the congregation. When there are candidates to be baptized, confirmed, or received, or when people desire to reaffirm their Christian faith, we shall thank God for the commitments being made and for the growing of God's kingdom! Additionally, these visits allow the Bishop to share fellowship with you with the community of saints doing ministry in your particular part of God's kingdom.

VISITATION SCHEDULING

Each congregation / Mission is assigned a visitation date. If the visitation date that a congregation has been assigned needs to be changed, it is the responsibility of the person in charge of the congregation / Mission to contact the leadership of another congregation and inquire about switching visitation dates. Once accomplished, the leader who initiated the change must notify Marlys Fratzke at the Diocesan Office at 605-494-2020 or office@episcopalchurchsd.org and request the change. A change in visitation dates will be considered official after Marlys Fratzke has the Bishop's approval and then contacts the leadership of both congregations.

Even with the care given to creating the Visitation Schedule, flexibility will be needed. Weather issues, illnesses, and travel delays may require last-minute rescheduling. However, changes will be kept to a minimum, and those challenges will be met as they arise.

BISHOP'S VISITATION FORM

Before the visit, Marlys Fratzke will send a copy of the Bishop's Visitation Form to the clergyperson or layperson in charge of a congregation. This form is also available on our Diocesan website. The Bishop's Visitation form is to be completed and returned to Marlys Fratzke no later than two days **before** the Pre-Visitation Meeting scheduled

between the Bishop and the clergyperson or layperson in charge of a congregation to discuss the visit.

PRE-VISITATION MEETING

Around two months before the visit, Marlys Fratzke will contact the clergyperson or layperson in charge of a congregation to arrange a Pre-Visitation Meeting between them and the Bishop. The purpose of the Pre-Visitation meeting is to discuss both the scheduling and the specifics of the Bishop's Visit. The scheduling of these meetings will be dependent upon the Bishop's schedule. These Pre-Visitation meetings may occur via Zoom, over the phone, or in person. **If using Zoom, the clergyperson or layperson in charge should ensure that they have a good connection.**

WHEN MORE THAN ONE CONGREGATION IS TO BE VISITED DURING A BISHOP'S VISITATION

If the Bishop visits more than one congregation during a visitation, the clergyperson or laypersons in charge must fill out a separate Visitation Form for each service. The maximum number of scheduled services per day will be two, and the Bishop's travel time back to Pierre is to be considered when planning the last service on a Sunday. It is requested that no Sunday service start later than 2 p.m.

THE LITURGY OF THE DAY

Eucharistic Forms

All visitations usually will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharistic Prayers may be chosen from the Book of Common Prayer or from other sources approved by the General Convention. No alterations of wording are to be made that are not per our canons and rubrics.

Renewal of Baptismal Vows in Place of Nicene Creed

When there are no baptisms, confirmations, or receptions, the liturgy on the day of the visitation will include the renewal of baptismal vows in place of the Nicene Creed, using the format found on page 292 of the Book of Common Prayer, including the final collect.

Propers of the Day

The Propers of the Day will be used even when baptismal or confirmation rites occur.

Liturgical Color

The liturgical color of the season is to be the color of the day during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, the Day of Pentecost, and other feast Sundays. The liturgical color will be white when a baptism or confirmation is celebrated during Ordinary Time. Otherwise, the liturgical color will be green.

The clergy or lay leader in charge of the congregation should make the necessary congregational announcements. During this time, the clergy or lay leader in charge of the congregation should share that the undesignated offering is to go to the Bishop's Discretionary fund for pastoral emergencies and non-budgeted ministries that arise in the course of the year.

THE ROLE OF THE PRIEST AND DEACON

Either a deacon whom the Bishop has assigned to that congregation, or the priest in charge of the congregation, is asked to read the Gospel, to set the altar before communion, and to clear the altar after communion. The Bishop will distribute the bread, and the priest or lay leader in charge of the congregation will serve as a chalice bearer. Other priests, deacons, or chalicists available at the service will be used as necessary or at the discretion of the priest or layperson in charge of the congregation. The Bishop prefers not to do ablutions following the distribution of Holy Communion. If that is the custom of your congregation, the deacon or priest may do ablutions while clearing the altar.

BISHOP'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

The offering designated for the Bishop's Discretionary Fund should be sent by check to the Diocesan Office shortly following the Bishop's Visitation.

BULLETINS

If your church uses a bulletin, and especially if the full service is going to be printed, please send a draft version in pdf or Word format to Marlys Fratzke at office@episcopalchurchsd.org before it is printed.

BAPTISMS

The Book of Common Prayer notes that a Bishop's Visitation is one of the especially appropriate times for Holy Baptism. The rubrics on page 298 of the Book of Common Prayer outline the roles of the Bishop and the Priests during a baptism service. Please refer to these rubrics for the service.

When the Bishop presides over a baptism, please provide him with the full name of those being baptized in writing before the service.

When a Bishop presides over a baptism, chrism is not required. If you need chrism, notify the Diocesan Office in advance, and the Bishop will bring a vial for you.

CONFIRMATIONS, RECEPTIONS, AND REAFFIRMATIONS

Instruction Required

It is expected that all candidates to be confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church have received adequate instruction and have been prepared by their clergy, by a catechist, or by someone else approved to provide formation in this area. We do not confirm or receive "walk-ins," i.e., those being encouraged to be confirmed because "the Bishop is here" or because "they are old enough," or so that they may receive a Niobrara Cross.

Preferred Words of Confirmation

It is the Bishop's preference to use the words of confirmation that begin with, "Defend, O Lord, your servant, *N.*, with your heavenly grace…" If printing a bulletin, please use this form.

Name Tags for Candidates

Candidates to be confirmed, received, or who wish to reaffirm their baptismal vows during a visitation may be presented to the Bishop in the most convenient order. **Name tags are to be used to identify the names of candidates; they are to be placed where the Bishop can see them.**

NIOBRARA CROSSES

Niobrara Crosses will be blessed and presented to confirmands and those being received into the Episcopal Church by the Bishop on behalf of the Niobrara Convocation. The clergy person or layperson in charge of a congregation may present other items (i.e. prayer books, Bibles) to the person who has been confirmed or received after the candidate has been presented with their Niobrara Cross.

If a person has lost their Niobrara Cross and is seeking a replacement, that person's confirmation or reception into the Episcopal Church is to be validated by their priest or by the layperson in charge of the congregation who has access to their parish registers. If the person's confirmation can be verified using the registers while the Bishop is making a visitation, and if the Bishop has extra crosses available, the person may buy a replacement (large) cross at the cost of $18.00. If that person's priest or layperson in charge of a congregation is not available, or if they cannot immediately verify that the person requesting a replacement cross has been confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church using the registers, the priest or layperson is to contact Marlys Fratzke at office@episcopalchurchsd.org or at (605) 494-2020.

PARISH REGISTERS

It is required by Canon that the Bishop review the Parish Register during the visitation. Please have your congregation's worship and membership registers available for review.

VISITS WITH VESTRIES / BISHOP'S COMMITTEE / MISSION COUNCIL

During this visitation cycle, the Bishop expects to meet with the clergy and officers of a congregation's Vestry, Bishop's Committee, or Mission Council. **Any Vestry, Bishop's Committee, or Mission Council members who would like to participate in this conversation are welcome.** This meeting could occur on a Saturday afternoon before a Sunday visitation. In reservations where multiple congregations are being visited, some flexibility obviously will be required. Please see the Visitation Form for more details about this discussion.

LODGING

Usually, the Bishop will arrange and pay for his own lodging. If a congregation wishes to make an exception, please get in touch with the Diocesan Office.

OTHER

If schedules permit, on the night before a Visitation, the Bishop enjoys having dinner with the congregation's clergy person (and spouse and family) or the layperson in charge of a congregation (and their spouse and family). These dinners can occur at a restaurant of the clergyperson's or layperson's choosing. This time is purely for fellowship and an opportunity to catch up personally.